COLE BLEASE GRAHAM [CBG]: This is Tape 24, Side 1, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair as part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is June 21, 1983. Governor, we've been talking about the general area of law enforcement and the way it's structured. One office that we haven't discussed is that of coroner. What do coroners do, and how do they relate to a governor?

ROBERT E. McNAIR [REM]: Well, very little, really. The coroner historically has investigated what appear to be deaths that were not by natural causes or to determine whether there were natural causes or not in circumstances when they weren't sure. Basically, that's been it, the whole inquest. Beyond that, the coroners have not done much although the coroner by law, if something happens to the sheriff, assumes that responsibility until a new sheriff is either appointed or elected. So they do have that possible responsibility standing there.

The big thing was to--I think everybody was concerned about it--get some uniformity in the way the coroner's office was carried out. There wasn't much attention focused to it mainly because there were so many other priority things that had to be done. We constantly were in, at that time, discussions and proposals to have a state pathologist who, in effect, would come in and more or less take over some of the responsibilities. Coroners were generally opposed to it because they had historically performed that role and, when they needed to, would send the body to the Medical University of South Carolina to the pathologists down there. But there wasn't really much attention given to coroners, and there wasn't any effort to bring them into any kind of training program or such as that at that time.

CBG: There were no moves to develop the medical examiner office?

REM: Yes, there was. There was a strong move during that time to have the medical examiner. There was a big fight in Richland County, particularly, from year to year in the legislature. It was a big political battle and that was true in most of the major counties where there was a strong medical society. There was never any real strong support to establish a medical examiner position countywide because there just wasn't much way to fit it in. The rural areas had less trouble than the others because the coroner there called the county physician. Most counties had a county doctor, and normally, if there was any question, he was immediately called, and the doctor performed the function and made the decision about referring or bringing in the pathologist from the Medical University and things of that nature. I suppose a bad system worked better in the smaller counties than it did in the others.

CBG: As you look on this area of law enforcement, does it really develop that law enforcement has more of a local standard or a community standard as a basis for proceeding, or is the state really able to prescribe minimum standards and let the communities go from there?

REM: More so today. Certainly in the period that we're talking about, the fifties, the sixties, and along in there and leading up to that, it was more localized, and local standards were set. Small towns and cities pretty well determined how they would operate. Counties were the same way. The sheriff was the chief law enforcement officer of the county. He was an elected official. He answered not to a county council or to anybody other than to the people. So, yes, it was more localized and it served its purpose in those days.

I think that was the reason we began to look for something that would coordinate activities, training programs, and, of course, with the unified court system which came along following all of that. So our

outgrowth of getting people together and getting the court involved in the whole judicial process, the whole criminal justice process, also led to some uniformity. So much has happened since I left, some follow-through but a lot new, sort of further developments in that area until we now have a lot of uniformity, uniform arrest warrants. That contributed a whole lot to the reporting system and keeping up with what's going on with the magistrates, now part of the judicial system and more or less under the supervision of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice. That has perhaps done more to improve that system than anything else because it moved it from the political arena to the judicial arena,

CBG: We were talking about the sheriff a moment ago. How is it that there were two, I believe it is, chiefs of police for counties in which the sheriff perhaps has a diminished function?

REM: Yes. That, of course, I suppose, is a part of politics as much as anything else. Sheriffs generally were powerful political figures. Being the chief law enforcement officer and being an elected official, they had a lot of influence and a lot of power. There was a struggle as county government began to grow. Sheriffs historically got fees for serving all the civil papers, and that made the sheriff's office more than just the salary he was paid. That, in some places, particularly in the larger places, made it a very rewarding office. You made more from fees, process serving, then you did from your salary. That's where the struggle began. I think the biggest, you know, was in Charleston where there was the first county council in the state. The battle arose, there, and finally the county police force was established under county council with a chief. The sheriff was continued but really as a process server. That followed through in Horry County where some of the same situation existed. They moved and established a county police force with

a county chief, and again the sheriff was then more or less relegated to the position of a process server.

CBG: The basic idea then is that this county chief would be a hired professional . . .

REM: He was.

CBG: . . . who would be salaried and therefore his exercise of discretion would not be, how do you say it, potentially tilted by the capability of collecting fees.

REM: That's right.

CBG: That's the logic.

REM: That’s right. That was the logic and the fact that he didn’t have to run in a popular election, so he was, you would assume, freer to carry out his duties and responsibilities. The sheriff was always in a very delicate political position, and a lot of very sensitive things developed. So this was all part of that although the sheriffs are constitutional officers and have historically performed well.

CBG: What makes a sheriff so powerful? Is it that the sheriff can give people jobs or arrest people or not arrest people?

REM: Well, no, I don't know what it is really when you think about it because you've got your county auditors and treasurers. A lot of it is personality, too, because you find the county treasurer in some counties is sort of the dominant political influence and in others you’d find the sheriff. Lots of clerks of court are powerful political people because of their personality and the way they dealt with the public, but by and large sheriffs were influential people. I don't know either because you can't say it was because they could give out jobs.

CBG: Weren't many to give.

REM: That's true. There weren't that many to give. There were limited numbers of deputies at that time. There were, you know, one or two in the small counties. So it was a matter of personality, and I suppose a lot of it went to respect. People had a lot of respect then. I think the whole attitude was different about law enforcement. We went through the sixties and came out of there with somewhat different attitudes about public officials and particularly about law enforcement. So we're talking about a time, the transition period, from a high regard and real respect for public officials, law enforcement, to the period where there was none or little. That was true politically as well as otherwise.

CBG: In looking at county government, I suppose, or the complex of law enforcement officials that we've been talking about, there's an old phrase I may have mentioned to you before. I think V. O. Key came up with it. He described the political structure of counties as being granular. By that I think he meant that politics came in blocs or that votes in state elections came in blocs rather than a more fluid structure in which individuals would have voted. Did you observe, along with changes in these offices, changes in what might be the political structure of counties? In other words, were there such things as courthouse gangs?

REM: Oh, right. (chuckles)

CBG: Did they diminish with these changes?

REM: Well, back earlier, if you were running statewide and you had the support of the courthouse crowd, you were pretty comfortable in the smaller, the medium to smaller, counties because those were the people that had the influence. It was influence because they were supposed to know, and the other people had respect for them. So if they knew the candidates through their own activities and their own state associations

and all and went back home and said, “We know all these fellows, but this is the better one,” or “This is the one I’m going to support,” that was a very, very strong influence on the public. You realize that we've come through so much from a time of personal contact with the politics of the day, the stump speakings in every precinct in the county and, gosh, those were precincts all over everywhere and the speakings at the statewide level, speakings in every county courthouse, and actually walking up and down the streets, to the day of the media now. It's sort of like mass marketing. You target the population centers, the big voting areas, you target the special interest groups, and you do it by television.

So it's changed, but, yes, the courthouse crowd was a tremendous influence in statewide politics, and thus that made them a more powerful bloc because they were the ones normally that had the contact with the statewide people. The governors, the senators, even the congressmen running always managed to stop at every courthouse and spend a half a day at every courthouse where people could come visiting. I think that gave them that sort of aura, but it was real. And the sheriff was usually--except in those rare cases where somebody else had the dominating personality--the sheriff was usually the central political figure.

CBG: Did you feel that local law enforcement officers may have tried to coattail sometimes a state official in politics?

REM: Well, . . .

CBG: It really wasn't true, though, was it, because governors couldn't succeed themselves?

REM: That's right. Governors couldn't succeed themselves, and it really wasn't true.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I think it was more that, if there was such a thing as a local courthouse ticket, you tried to get on that because if you could get on that, then you felt comfortable that you were going to carry that county.

CBG: Yes.

REM: There were very few people statewide who had that kind of influence to where you tried to ride their coattails.

CBG: Are there other general thoughts or comments now about these law enforcement officers? We have one specialized law enforcement topic left to discuss, and that's highway safety.

REM: No. Basically, you know, the chief of police has handled law enforcement in the city, and the sheriff has handled law enforcement in the county. By tradition and by agreement, the sheriffs didn’t bother to interfere in the cities unless they were invited in, and by law and everything else the city people couldn’t go outside. So there was seldom any problem there. SLED [State Law Enforcement Division] was developing as a support force for them, and the highway patrol exclusively looked out for traffic, and the game wardens looked out for game violations. It pretty well operated that way until we reached the point where we had problems which sort of overrode all of that, and I think we’ve already spent time on how we could pull all that together and coordinate it, and in doing that then how we could improve the training and thus the quality of enforcement on the local level. We’ve talked about that and the birth of the criminal justice training center and all those programs. So we've pretty well covered that.

CBG: Yes, I think we could make one general theme, that the idea was to build on the established system which was elective in nature, at least at the county level, and establish a broader range of professional skills for all law enforcement officers both elected and hired.

REM: Well, that's very, very true, first to establish minimum qualifications, which we really didn't have. The highway patrol had it, but they didn't exist for others, and then the training programs and to develop a sort of esprit de corps and pride and all the things that go with building up a whole better criminal justice system for the state as a whole.

CBG: Focusing then on highway safety, a lot of programs I suppose were originated over time to deal with this, but was highway safety one of the new federal programs that came down?

REM: It was. Having been chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, naturally I had a background and had been involved in a lot of proposed legislation that dealt with highway safety because any change in the criminal laws and all went through that committee. So with that background, I came in with some familiarity with it. But I think until sitting down at the governor's office level and taking a look at what was happening on the highways, I hadn't gotten the full impact of it. Then, with the federal program coming, with the funds there to improve safety on the highways as a result of the interstate system--of course, we already had all the federal support programs--that again focused on highway safety. We had established around the country highway safety councils with a lot of the business community supporting them and the business community really financing those councils. To me, those were very effective because there were a broad cross-section of people who had come in organized to do something about safety on the highways, and they had become sort of a main force, the main citizens’ group supporting highway safety, supporting strengthening the laws, and doing all the things that were necessary.

CBG: Was the real problem of highway safety just the rate of injury and death on highways?

REM: Well, it was a combination of things, really, and I think when we first took a look at it, the death rate in South Carolina was the highest in the nation. That certainly got my attention and everybody else's and it was the kind of the thing we had to do something about. The economic loss from that and from injuries was just astounding when we put the dollar figure to it.

CBG: Yes.

QEM: . . . I mean the highway injuries, and then when we began to look and find out where those things were, and that again came from getting an information system that you could have some reliance on and we began to find out where they were. The thing that appalled me was that most of the deaths and serious injuries came from single car accidents on rural roads in clear weather, which told you it was just reckless driving, carelessness, foolishness.

So the interstate highway system had the best death rate of all, and there's where people were driving the fastest, but certainly we could understand why on the open highways with controlled access and all of that. It sort of told us that we had to address the problem a little differently than what we thought before, that the real problem was out on the rural roads in clear weather, single cars. I used to laugh and say--I mean I'm being facetious--that more pine trees moved out of the edge of the woods into that highway than I ever thought could happen.

Then we discovered the drinking driver. Speed and drinking were the two things that were the main causes of most of the serious or fatal injuries in the state. So we had to do something about both of them, and I think that's sort of where we started with that. We had a fairly

strong driving under the influence law because if you got caught, it was six months loss of license for the first offense and on up to potential jail offenses, which the judges weren't inclined to do, but the problem was conviction. You know, it was always a jury question, and it was a patrolman's word against some prominent citizen's word with a lot of his friends supporting him that he'd only had one drink or two drinks and something happened to cause him to weave over the road.

So that's where we finally came into the breathalizer as being a way of having some kind of presumptive evidence that you were under the influence. That was a very difficult thing because the general attitude was that you're making people violate their own constitutional rights because they're in effect giving evidence against themselves. You were sort of testifying against yourself. You couldn't take the fifth amendment on the breathalizer.

CBG: (chuckles)

REM: And that was a very difficult situation. The point system we thought was a good approach on the speeding, reckless driver, a careless driver, a fellow that just didn't stop for the stop sign or drove too fast consistently, was to develop a point system and implement that and suspend licenses based on that point system. On the other side, there's always a person who’s going to improve and do better, and we had it where you could work your points off. If you went so long, they were cut in half, and if you went so 1ong, they were totally abolished. So it wasn't a punitive thing that stayed with somebody.

We had, as I say, strong support from that council, and we had people like Henry Cauthen, who was then editor of the Columbia Record, and Buck Edwards, who headed Southern Bell here and was one of the more prominent people. Those were the kinds of people and a lot of the strong

female support naturally on highway safety and a very strong committee in the legislature headed by then Senator Richardson from Florence, Henry Richardson, Punch Richardson. His whole legislative program was aimed at highway safety not solely, but with a lot of support. We felt that something we needed to put a major focus on was safety on the highways and doing something to reduce the death rate and to improve safety.

We also had an old, what we called, a speed presumption law. If you were driving more than so many miles an hour, we presumed that you were driving too fast for conditions. We went away from that to the maximum speed law, so again it wasn't that jury judgment decision of whether you were driving too fast for conditions as much as it was if you were exceeding the maximum speed law.

CBG: Had radar units come into use?

REM: Radar units, no. They were just beginning to get in. They were just beginning to come, and again that's where the federal highway safety funds were available to do things like that and to purchase equipment. That was beginning to come in, even the old thing where you could photograph somebody. I think the biggest shock in the world, you know, was when the patrolman would appear, well that's your photograph, isn't it.

CBG: Yes, yes.

REM: Those things didn't last too 1ong, but they were coming with all of that, and those things were developing. Radar was beginning, and as it developed through the federal funds, you were able to purchase that equipment. That was very helpful because you could do some things that perhaps would have been politically difficult and would have been difficult to get funds through the legislature without a whole lot of study and a lot of time and debate to implement. We also determined

early that there was no way we could police and patrol the highways in South Carolina with the number of patrolman we had. Those fellows were working seven days a week, on call twenty-four hours a day. A rural county patrolman had a terrible situation because he got calls at eleven, twelve, two or three o'clock in the morning if there was a wreck. We had to do something about that. So to improve the number was a real project. I recall our goal was to get the number up to 500 so that we'd have an adequate, at that time we thought, adequate number of patrols, to put them on shifts and professionalize them and organize them for an effective patrol.

CBG: Did the basic policy decisions on highway safety come from the council, or did you have experts hired?

REM: We had people we brought in and staff people who worked with them. The council--I would have to give an awful lot of credit to them. They did the research, the studies, they knew what was going on all around the country. They were able to come with pretty strong programs that they would recommend, basically seeking an endorsement of it. So I would have to give them an awful lot of the credit for developing our programs based on their studies. We then were able with federal funds to establish a highway safety program itself.

That's where we brought in a retired general who had had a history in the military for establishing good strong safety programs at the various bases where he was and had distinguished himself in his military career. We were able to bring him in on retirement to head up the program, and I think everybody was concerned that we were going to militarize it, really get rigid, but he was an awfully good fellow. He understood, but he was also a fellow who thought things ought to be done and would move it forward, and he coordinated. The big problem with all

the federal funds coming was to fund local projects or to apportion the money out to the appropriate agencies or areas or local units, and thus he served as the coordinator for the federal program that we then had coming through.

CBG: Did you or did the council put much emphasis on education?

REM: Yes, that was a big thing, and we developed a lot of public programs. The highway department always had the highway patrol go around to all the schools and civic clubs and talk. They would put spots, as much as they could get, on television, but this group would develop programs for the media, programs for the schools, programs for industry. We started out putting on these safety programs. Defensive driving was a very key thing. That's not so much the advertising program and the PR program. People who completed that got credit on their insurance for it. So that was an incentive.

The insurance companies were, naturally, proponents of good highway safety programs. We could put defensive driving in industry, and they were very supportive because they would put it in the plant, and that led us then from highway safety to a broad safety program. The councils then even got involved in safety on the job, but primarily we focused on safety from the time you leave the plant to you get back home, the old thing of stopping for two or three beers along the way before you got there and getting into a wreck and watching out for that reckless driver. The defensive driver program became a very key element because we felt that that was one way you could get something done because you were talking to the people who were concerned and who would respond. My recollection is that was very successful.

CBG: Did driver education move into the public schools?

REM: It was already there. It accelerated with the funds available. There were driver education teachers in all of the schools, and I think when young people started driving school buses, that put more emphasis on driver education at the public school level with safety. More people were conscious of it, but that again was one that was supported broadly and supported by the insurance industry pretty strongly.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 24, Side 2, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair as a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is June 21, 1983. Governor, as we shift to talking about the more general political role of the governor, what does it mean to say that the governor is the leader of his party?

REM: (chuckles) Well . . .

CBG: Is it possible for a governor really to lead a political party?

REM: That depends on what you're talking about by leadership. I think we sort of grew into that, and the thing is we have to look at the old growth and transition of policies because we in the South were a one-party state so 1ong, and the rest of the country, of course, had not only two, but other, parties as well during all that period. When it came to national politics, not in every state, but in some, the governor did effectively become the leader of his party. When we had the old one-party system, we had so many factions that the party really didn't exist as a party. The only thing the party did was conduct a primary, and then it ceased to exist, and it reorganized for the next election. We had a

state chairman, but that state chairman performed that function, and that was pretty much it.

In national elections, it was normally a different crowd, really, because we went through that period where, you know, we didn't really affiliate with and weren't a part of the national party. That was true, I think, of both Republicans and Democrats. Of course, the Republicans didn't exist very much. And it'd depend on the party, too, that you were part of and inherited. We always said ours was more dominated by the bishop from Barnwell than it was by anybody else because Senator [Edgar] Brown, when it came to national politics, was the leader. He had been the national executive committeeman for so 1ong, and thus he was the leader of the party as far as national elections and national politics was concerned. He had been a member of the national executive committee as well as the state executive committee from South Carolina, and we looked on him as sort of being our leader there. Up until the sixties--when I came along, we had the first Republican candidate for governor, I think, in this century--the party didn't really mean very much as far as we were all concerned. We had our own organizations to get elected, and then, you know, since you couldn't succeed yourself, that organization didn't continue and didn't follow through. Previously we'd had the Bleasites, and I think old Cotton Ed Smith . . .

CBG: Smith had . . .

REM: . . . had his and when Olin Johnston came along, I suppose in our time that was the closest parallel to previous ones because he'd run a couple of times, ran for the senate a couple of times. So you had the Johnstonites, which was a very strong faction.

CBG: And these loyalties were fairly sharply personal.

REM: Oh, gosh, yes.

CBG: I mean, it's like being a member of a political family, I guess.

REM: I think so, and I often said that there was really much more competition there than there is now. I found, and I often said, that in the primary, when you had everybody running, people selected the person they wanted to vote for or the person who was a part of that political faction rather than a part of the party and just more or less rubber stamp. So my attitude was that you got better people down the line because everybody sort of did it on a more personal basis than on a partisan political basis. But, yes, those were sharply divided, and it was in the counties. You had the political factions within the counties, and it was very bitter in instances. You know we often remember that there'd be shootouts and everything else. Political factions pretty well dominated and controlled the whole life of the community in those days.

CBG: Had we about, say, by the end of World War II, gotten past the point of . . .

REM: I think yes. I think we had. The only person that I can recall who had built sort of a political party was Senator [J. Strom] Thurmond. You know, he'd come along, and he'd run a couple of times. Leading the states' rights movement and all of that had sort of created him as another leader of a political philosophical group, a political faction in the state, and I believe that was the last of the real old time factionalism.

CBG: Did you find that these factions were basically friends and neighbors? In other words, if I came from Orangeburg County, I would have a very strong following in Orangeburg County and some in neighboring counties, but find very little support, say, in Chesterfield County.

REM: Yes, because we were more regionalized then. You know, we had the lower state and the upper state, the Piedmont, the Pee Dee, and the

Sandhills, and all of that, and you had your following in that particular region probably because we didn't have any better communications than we did at that time, I suppose, and partly because the economy of the state and everything was regionalized at that time.

CBG: And even on the stump if you went into another part of the state, you'd probably be an outsider talking against a friendly local . . .

REM: Right.

CBG: . . . for the same office.

REM: For the same thing.

CBG: Yes.

REM: The small counties sometimes had the strongest factions. You get into Dorchester County with Senator Herbert Jessen and previous to that somebody like [St. Clair] Muckenfuss.

CBG: Yes.

REM: They had historically very, very strong political factions. Berkeley County had, going back to Senator [Rembert] Dennis's father, the Dennis faction and the anti-Dennis group. Marvin Murray came along; so you were really seriously divided, I feel, a lot more bitter than it is today with the partisan politics that we have.

CBG: Senator Dennis's father was killed, wasn't he?

REM: Yes, he was shot and killed.

CBG: On a political . . .

REM: On a basically political situation.

CBG: In the county, would it be that there would be a loyal following, say, in one section of the county and one would be an outsider on the other side of the county.

REM: Well, it depended, I suppose, Blease, on where you were. In Horry

County, yes, you had the ones east of the waterway and the ones west of the waterway. In Charleston you had the Broad Street crowd, and then you had North Charleston right there, a very divided metropolitan area that was right down the line, too. Of course, I suppose others had somewhat the same thing. The state was so divided between the upstate and the lower state, and that went on over into the legislature, and it got on over into the local politics of the state at that time. It was always difficult for somebody from one section to command a lot of support in the other.

CBG: Was that one of the basic roots behind the Governor Johnston—Highway Department confrontation in the 1930's, of which, I think we have talked about a little bit earlier?

REM: Well.

CBG: . . . that maybe there was a regional difference as well.

REM: Well, probably there was some part of that, but it was more of, I think, just a personality thing between then Governor Johnston and Ben Sawyer, who was a very strong-willed individual. He just ran the Highway Department.

CBG: Yes.

REM: And Senator Johnston played politics very strong. He believed in the patronage system, and I think he wanted control of the Highway Department, the highway funds. He wanted to be able to allocate those funds around because if you could--like Georgia politics has always been on control of that highway department and the allocation of monies. That was, I think, always one of the main strengths behind the successful candidates over there. So it was a just a personality thing and to some degree a power struggle between very, very strong, dominating individuals.

CBG: As we talk about all these politics, I'm thinking maybe the better question would be, how does a governor avoid hurting himself in relating to the party?

REM: I think that's probably true because at that time it was sort of like that. Again, I suppose I came along at a time when the two-party system was coming on in South Carolina and developing. We'd had people run in Richland County and Charleston County and get elected as Republican, and therefore we had some developing Republicanism in the state. Then when we had the governor's race, we determined that we needed a party. Mr. [Donald] Russell had worked to establish a party organization under the then chairman. I believe it was either Ted Riley or Yancey McLeod. I don't recall which. They were shifting at that time to a party organization here. Then when I came along, we recognized that we really had to have a party organization if we were going to live in that two-party world. We began to help develop it. Also that was at the time when we were going through the period of the Democratic party trying to get back more into the mainstream rather than to continue as an isolated state entity with no affiliation with the national party. Senator Brown had been our only link through the years and had kept us as a part of the national Democratic party.

CBG: There is maybe one other political concern as well, and that is the role of the county senator. Were county senators influential . . .

REM: Yes.

CBG: . . . in party affairs?

REM: Oh, yes. They were. They, in that time, felt they had to control the party machinery . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . in the election process. So when it came to organizing the precincts and organizing the counties, the senator was always a strong influence and normally worked real hard to have what you'd call then control of the local party machinery. Those were the people who appointed the poll managers and workers who counted the ballots and all of that. That was very critical. So that's where the factionalism, I think, got to be so bitter, was over organizing. If somebody in a different political faction was going to run, it was organizing the political machinery in the county because it wasn't so much the state party that controlled the poll workers and the managers. It was the county party. Thus the senators did, and they generally were very, very influential and very strong in those, and quite often were what we called the county executive committee member themselves to the state committee, so that they would form that state executive committee and have strong influence or control over the state party.

CBG: So one of the bases, at least, for organizing the state party would be to build on this county . . .

REM: Right.

CBG: . . . tradition.

REM: To build on that and, up until then, to control the party machinery and mechanism. You recall, the biggest things we had back in that time was a contest normally in a senator's race or something like that. I can recall when George McKown was the senator from Cherokee County that about every four years it would be from one to five or six votes difference, and the state executive committee would end up having to, in effect, determine the winner.

CBG: Yes.

REM: That happened in others, too.

CBG: Has reapportionment of the state senate made much of an impact on this?

REM: Oh, yes, I would think that it has because the senators ceased to be county senators and became district senators, representing several counties or one little segment of a county.

CBG: And that really started about the middle sixties.

REM: That started in the middle sixties, yes. I fell heir to that, too, and had to call the first special session to reapportion the state senate. The house, as we've said before, had historically done it every ten years when the census came out.

CBG: So that gradually we could see, let’s say, a reduction in this senatorial control.

REM: Yes, and probably--I'm not sure whether there was a lessening of their interests really--but I suspect there may have been a lessening in interest because they then relied more on the county leaders and county officials to sort of take care of that. Again I think that’s where the county leadership, the courthouse group and others, sort of began to come back into . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . that role and to be sort of a dominant political influence. But also with the involvement of more people and particularly with the involvement of the blacks, you recall, that all took place about the same time, and they were the ones that generally would come out more to the precinct meetings and to the county meetings on Saturday afternoon than others and became a real factor then in the party organization. Someone could organize the party by simply getting out and lining up, not substantial numbers, but a pretty good number of people coming out and really take control of the party organization. It took a while for

people to recognize the importance of it. They'd been accustomed to going and having their crowd there and having their slate of officers and doing it in a perfunctory fashion, other than in those counties where there was strong factionalism and always had huge interest.

CBG: Would you characterize the ten years then from 1960 to 1970 as being one in which a state party system or at least a state party began to develop with some organization . . .

REM: Yes.

CBG: . . . as a replacement for the previous factions and . . .

REM: Yes.

CBG: . . . personal control.

REM: Yes, I think that's a good way to do it, of necessity.

CBG: Yes.

REM: That's when, as we say, it became necessary in our minds to have a party organization, a permanent organization. It was an ongoing organization to coordinate more the activities of the various county parties and to involve everybody more at a statewide level rather than just from a local standpoint.

CBG: Did you do this by hiring an executive officer?

REM: Yes, what we did was we recognized that we had to begin to do things and to involve more people in the party itself and make them feel like they were a part of it. So what we determined we had to do was to get some good people involved, get some permanent people involved, and get some financial support for it. That's where we sat around and first determined that young Earle Morris, who'd been a house member and a young, bright, attractive state senator from the upper part of the state represented the kind of new image and youth involvement that we wanted. We persuaded Earl to become state chairman and then reached out and

brought in a young history professor from Wofford, again, to give that image of bringing in the bright, new, young group. That was Don Fowler.

Bringing them in and having to have some resources, we went out and organized what now is referred to and was then as the Committee of 100. That's where I had to get actively involved and actually get a hundred people to put up five hundred dollars a piece to support the party organization, not to go to campaigns, not to be used to support any candidates, but just to support the party organization. That was the budget for it and continued on for a number of years. We got them involved by going to the business community and getting that to support the state democratic party organization. You know, most of the contributors were people who probably voted Republican in national elections, but we formed a committee from that group to manage those monies, and thus they were not only contributing but determining how the thing operated. They sort of formed a budget committee for the party and controlled the flow of funds and really were the ones that got and collected it.

CBG: Did you find a lot of enthusiasm? In other words, was it hard to get a hundred people?

REM: No, it really wasn't. Frankly it surprised us . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . at how we did it. We didn't give them anything, but we did give them some recognition. I can recall bringing that group, the Committee of a Hundred, in on a prelegislative session--I mean before the session--and meet and have lunch with them and sort of go over with them what we were going to try to accomplish, what our goals were, and what our purposes were. It served a two-fold function. It gave them something, but it gave me a forum of usually the key business leaders

because these were the Jim Selfs and the Bill Closes and the Buck Mickels and the McKissicks and the Hugh Lanes and the Hootie Johnsons and the Bill Lyles and the folks in the Pee Dee and on over, the Craig Walls. It was a good group, not only to let them feel like they were getting some good information and know what was going on, but to form a nucleus of a strong support base. We had receptions for them normally once a year at the mansion before a football game. I would go from one region of the state to the other to a fundraiser that they would have. It served a lot of good purposes, but that was the beginning of building the party organization.

CBG: Did you restrict this group to just citizens? Were there elected officials in it?

REM: Well, we had some. You know, there would be some, but we weren't looking for them to contribute to it. We looked for their participation in it, and when we had functions, they were always there. That way, someone coming to one of these functions would get to see all the top state officials. A lot of folks would frown on something like that, but it was letting them see their leaders and being able to chat with them on an informal basis.

CBG: Have you ever speculated that, if you hadn't done this, this group of people may have become Republican down the line?

REM: Well, I think they would have. There's no question about it, and some of them have.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Some of them have wandered off. We started the governor's dinners. That was the big fundraiser, not just, like we say, for the party, but to support the political activities. We had the governor's dinners, and that's where we would--you know, we had it annually--and we'd bring in a

governor from somewhere to speak at the dinner. Those were highly successful, and they still, I think, do those. We started by having one, then two or three. We'd have one in Greenville, one in Charleston, and then one in Columbia, and that formed the financial support base for the party as a whole.

CBG: Were you able to take Senator Brown's role as national committeeman?

REM: Senator Brown sort of, I think, looked on me as sort of a protegee of his and then seeing us move the party and move the state back into the mainstream Senator Brown then did in 1968--I think it was 1968 when we had the convention that year--come and say, "What I'd like for you to do is to become the national committeeman." He didn't want to establish a precedent, and that was one of the things we wanted to avoid. In some states the governor thought he ought to be the national committeeman, but because the party sometimes has a different political role to play than the governor has, or back then they didn't want governors to have too much influence because they were always running against senators. You couldn't really get a strong political group together to support a party. Everybody thought the governor was building the party to support him in his race for the United States Senate, and thus there was some skepticism. But Senator Brown, you know, that was his approach and his idea, and I did succeed him as national committeeman. I think that was the first time we'd had a governor who served in that role mainly because nobody wanted it.

CBG: Yes.

REM: (chuckles) Nobody would want to be in that position politically, having to be nationally identified and running in South Carolina.

CBG: Just because the tension would be too much.

REM: The tension was too much.

CBG: Yes.

REM: If you were a national Democrat, you know, you were having a lot of trouble politically.

CBG: Yes. Was this a position that was elected by party members?

REM: It's elected at the state convention just as the chairman was. Again, you know, the chairman has always--not to take away from it--but it hadn't been as meaningful as it was becoming, so I don't know that the governor had gotten as directly involved in who the party chairman ought to be. It didn't really mean that much to him, and party chairmen usually stayed on for several times and weren't identified particularly as having supported or not supported. Quite often, if a governor got elected and a party chairman had been against him actively and all, he'd be involved in trying to get somebody new. But I suppose it fell to my lot, not by choice, to play a bigger role in helping select and helping get in and nominate. I recall I nominated at the convention the party chairman during that period of time. During my time it was mostly young people who had been very active, Earle Morris and Crosby Lewis and Harry Lightsey, who's now dean of the Law School. Don Fowler was the executive director through that period of time, and then he became chairman. Everybody felt that he should, and he played the dual role for a while until he retired as state chairman.

CBG: Did you have to mount a campaign to become the national committeeman?

REM: No, I didn't really. There was no campaign at all. I could tell people I was sort of annointed by Senator Brown, and he let the word be out, and then he did me the honor of doing the nominating at the state convention. No, it was all very harmonious.

CBG: That could put a governor in a pickle, couldn't it, really, of having to, in effect, make some endorsing trades inside the party that would divide.

REM: I couldn't afford to really get into that. We had a pretty harmonious party during that period of time. I can recall some people who would let it be known they wanted to be state chairman or they might run for state chairman, but we never had a contest. It always came down to whomever generally we'd all agreed on.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We had some who surfaced and tried, but people had such strong objections until we didn’t, you know, push forward with them.

CBG: So if we picked a point in history now, let’s say, as you were getting ready to head to the 1968 Democratic convention, what we'd find in South Carolina is a fairly well-developed party structure with yourself as the national committeeman and with pretty much harmony or unity, let's say, in political views among members of the party. Did that survive the 1968 convention?

REM: Yes, I think it did, and then we had actively brought the blacks into the party organization to where they were full participants in it. Young people, women, all of that had begun. Getting them all in and getting people meshed together was taking place. Senator Brown and I were going through the transition at that time. You know, when you're national committeeman, you switch at the national convention. So he was still it through that convention.

CBG: I see.

REM: We were coming up to that all pretty much in harmony and focusing on the national issues then and the nomination of somebody to run for president.

END OF TAPE